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ABSTRACT

The first part of this publication delineates, in capsule form, the responsibilities of superintendents and other members of an administrative team. Thereafter, seven basic principles are presented that contribute to a sound, productive relationship between school boards and administrators: (1) a specific written description of administrators' professional duties and responsibilities; (2) the assurance of a thorough and regular evaluation of professional performance; (3) the opportunity to participate in administrative staff inservice training; (4) the expectation of proper review before the school board prior to dismissal, demotion, or nonrenewal; (5) compensation in accordance with established salary procedures; (6) a voice for administrators in the development and implementation of all policies; and (7) appropriate recognition due a member of a respected profession (professional associations can help). (TE)

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PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

Reviewed and Approved by the Joint AASA-NSBA Committee

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Books in this series include:
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INTRODUCTION

The Joint Committee of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA) has sponsored more than a dozen publications devoted to building sound, productive relationships between school boards and administrators. The committee also regularly engages in discussions devoted to issues of mutual interest and concern.

Principles of Effective School District Governance and Administration is the product of those discussions. This publication presents seven basic principles that contribute to this important relationship. It presents expectations that school administrators and school boards have for each other and explores the responsibilities of the superintendent and other members of the administrative team.

This statement was formulated by the Joint AASA-NSBA Committee and approved by the NSBA Board of Directors and AASA Executive Committee.

Principles of Effective School District Governance and Administration reflects a spirit of "working together," the teamwork that must take place if our schools are to achieve excellence in the education of students. We urge every school board member and administrator to consider the contents of this publication in their continuing efforts to build the educational leadership team.

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PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

School administrators assume major responsibilities when they become members of a district's leadership team. They must bring to their positions a high level of professional competence and dedication. The importance of this responsibility calls for the recognition of appropriate professional status by the school board. Administrators must realize that they serve as agents of the local school board and the state in fulfilling the educational goals of the state and community, and they must abide by the educational policies and professional standards established by that board and the state in which the district is located.

School boards should expect competent performance from school administrators. *School administrators,* at all levels, should expect the understanding and support of the school board in meeting their responsibilities and fulfilling expectations of the board and community. Both should be aware as quickly as possible of existing policies, procedures, laws, and traditions. Communication between the school board and its chief administrator is essential: essential to understanding, essential to support, and essential to ensuring that the best interests of education are encouraged and protected.

THE ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Accepting an administrative position in a school district is more than just agreeing to do a job. It involves a commitment to the board, the staff, the students, and the community to carry out certain responsibilities. These responsibilities are the cornerstone of all actions and statements and should be observed by all administrators with the same diligence that they would expect from the school board in carrying out its role.

Here, in capsule form, is a suggested list of responsibilities, some within the specific province of the superintendent and others inherent in *every* administrative position in a school system.

As superintendent:

- To serve as the board's chief executive officer and adviser.
- To provide leadership for the district's educational programs.
- To provide leadership for the district's long range strategic and short range operational plans.
- To describe for the board the successes, needs, and challenges facing the school system.
- To recommend policy options to the board with specific recommendations when circumstances require new policies or the revision of existing ones.
- To keep the board informed through sharing timely and accurate information.
- To recommend and assign members of the administrative team. (The superintendent generally oversees the development of appropriate job descriptions and ensures that they are followed. As a rule, the superintendent submits employment recommendations to the board for final approval.)
- To ensure an adequate evaluation/performance review system for district personnel and programs in accordance with district policies.

- To develop, recommend for approval, and administer the school district's budget and overall financial plan.
- To provide periodic progress reports on selected district policy.
- To consult with the board as part of the process of developing districtwide goals and objectives.
- To develop and inform the board, administration, and staff of administrative procedures needed to implement board policy.
- To ensure the management of the district's day-to-day operations.
- To provide an ever-present orientation that the overriding mission of the school system is education.

As a member of the administrative team:

- Through proper channels, to keep the board, fellow administrators, and staff informed about school operations and programs.
- To be committed to implementing approved policies and procedures.
- Through proper channels, to report to the administration and board the successes of the school district and the problems that should be corrected to ensure quality education for the community.
- To keep the community informed about board and school policies, programs, and procedures, and to be frank and open in reporting the successes and problem areas within the school district.
- To listen systematically to the school district's publics through surveys, hearings, and other appropriate methods to determine community needs and concerns and to ensure responsiveness.
- As a member of the administrative team, to assign leadership for districtwide and building level programs.
- To ensure development of and adherence to a school board policy for dealing with complaints from the public, channeling those complaints to individuals or departments that can deal most effectively with them.
- To be responsive to the needs and concerns of all members of the staff, both professional and support staff, and to welcome their suggestions on ways the educational program might be improved.
- To represent board policy and decisions in dealing with employer-employee issues.
- To make it possible, through investments in time and resources, for administration, staff, and ultimately the district to benefit from appropriate professional development activities.
- To promote constantly the fact that the primary mission of the administrative team is education.

THE ADMINISTRATOR'S EXPECTATIONS AS A MEMBER OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

When administrators assume responsibility within the school district, they should have reasonable assurances from the school board that they will be permitted, as members of the team, to provide appropriate leadership. The expectation of the school board should be consistent with laws, board policies, the profession of school administration, the needs of the student body, and the aspirations of the community for its schools.

In a fast-changing world, school administrators are confronted with a variety of volatile issues, many created by society as a whole but having a specific impact on the schools. Controversy may erupt, leaving the impression that the school administrator has "let things get out of control," when in fact controversy may occur as a normal part of the change process. Although competence is essential, the perception of competence may rise and fall as issues come and go. Therefore, it is essential that any person embarking on an administrative career in a school district have a clear understanding of what constitutes grounds for dismissal, demotion, or nonrenewal.

Here are seven suggested areas of reasonable expectations. Some are overlapping and interrelated. However, each deserves consideration in the employment relationship between the board and the superintendent and all other members of the administrative team:

1. *The provision of a specific and complete written description of the professional duties and responsibilities expected to be fulfilled.*

While a school board should expect that each administrator will bring

to the job a broad range of professional qualifications, this does not preclude the need for all members of the administrative team to have detailed job descriptions outlining their duties and responsibilities. These documents should be updated regularly and retained as part of a continuing file in the personnel office so that, when vacancies occur, applicants can be examined in the context of actual functions to be performed and skills to be required.

In seeking new administrators, however, a school district should never be satisfied with the provisions of existing job descriptions. Schools change to keep up with the needs of society. As a result, the demands on those who lead the educational system also change. Existing job descriptions may be used in the process of advertising and screening, however, provided the board agrees that the description is appropriate.

The new administrator should be given the opportunity, after appropriate consultation, to propose adjustments in the job responsibilities that will best serve the current and projected needs of the school system. Job descriptions should be dynamic, not static, and appropriate changes should be made as they are needed. A district may wish to develop an ongoing process for re-examining job descriptions to ensure that they are current and relevant.

It should be recognized that any administrative position involves responsibilities, both tangible and intangible, that may not find their way into the formal job description.

The process of creating a job description and agreeing on job goals should be a major part of the discussion of the employment contract, as is arriving at a fair salary. A job description should be developed through an appropriate process involving the board, the superintendent, and other administrators, keeping in mind that the superintendent and board constitute the "policy team." The superintendent and other administrators constitute the "administrative team." New superintendents or administrative team members should draw upon their professional experience and offer the first draft of a job description to be examined and modified in the process of reaching agreement. When goals and objectives are developed later, they should be consistent with the school district's policies and goals.

2. *The assurance that a thorough evaluation of professional performance will be conducted on a regular and continuing basis.*

Fair and impartial evaluation of all aspects of performance is a key to the sound governance and administration of any institution. School ad-

ministrators are expected to be able to evaluate the performance of their teachers and other staff, and they should expect their own performance to be evaluated by their supervisors. A process for evaluation should be developed between the superintendent and the school board that welcomes input from those who are being evaluated.

Evaluation of the superintendent should be scheduled as spelled out in the employment contract or school board policy. The session may be open or closed, depending on the agreement between the board and superintendent and the state laws. The joint AASA-NSBA publication, *Evaluating the Superintendent*, contains helpful information that can be used in developing an appropriate evaluation system for school administrators.

As in any objective evaluation procedure, the terms under which an administrator will be judged should be known well in advance and based largely on job descriptions and job goals. Evaluation should recognize positive and constructive performance. Critical evaluation that calls for improvement should include a mutually agreeable plan for professional development and define a period of time during which improvements will be made. Establishment of a process that allows for constructive and continual communication can lead to good board-superintendent and superintendent-administrative team relationships and contribute to better performance.

Evaluation should be supported through school board policy. The administrative team member also should have the opportunity to append an objection and appeal through appropriate administrative channels, especially if the evaluation has an impact on salary or job retention.

The highest authority for review within the system itself is the school board.

3. *The opportunity to participate in administrative staff inservice training programs that serve to improve professional performance in the present position and establish a basis for increased responsibilities in the future.*

A school system cannot afford to allow its administrators' skills and knowledge to become obsolete. Therefore, the district must ensure that opportunities for professional development are available to all members of the administrative staff. Programs are available from many sources: local staff development efforts, state or service agency programs, adminis-

trator associations, consultants, colleges and universities, and others.

School administrators should be expected to participate in professional development activities to keep their skills, knowledge, and insights current. School board members should encourage and enable that professional development to take place through policy, budget, and community support. The time, energy, and funds invested in inservice training pay off in better education within the schools of the community.

4. The expectation of proper review before the school board prior to dismissal, demotion, or non-reemployment.

As the policy-setting governing body of the district, the school board has the ultimate authority in all personnel matters within state law and district policy. A person whose future is at stake should have the opportunity to state his or her views to that authority through an appropriate hearing process. If formal hearings are held, they should be conducted according to clearly defined procedures and existing law. If law allows, the hearing, at the discretion of the administrator, should be held in a closed executive session of the board.

5. *Compensation for professional services should be provided in accordance with established salary procedures.*

A challenge for any school board is to attract and hold high quality administrators. Compensation for administrators should be based on their responsibilities and qualifications. Compensation should be "market sensitive" and should take into account opportunities in other districts, educational institutions, and comparable employment outside of education. Performance should generally determine compensation within a pre-established range.

Valuable insights into developing compensation programs are found in the Joint AASA-NSBA publications, *Compensating the Superintendent* and *Compensating the Administrative Team*. Both are available as full reports or in summary form.

6. *A voice in the development and implementation of all policies.*

A school board will make better policy decisions if appropriate staff members have an opportunity to suggest and review the possible impact of proposed policies affecting those programs for which they are responsible. Involvement not only leads to better decisions, but also encourages

good morale and team spirit.

The Joint AASA-NSBA publication *The Administrative Leadership Team* provides guidelines for effective involvement.

7. *Appropriate recognition due a member of a respected profession: professional associations can provide help.*

All administrators, when faced with concerns about administrator roles, expectations, and responsibilities, should take advantage of the assistance available through their state and national professional associations.

PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE

Recognition of the roles, responsibilities, and expectations discussed in this publication by administrators and school board members alike is a first step in guaranteeing true teamwork in a school system. Public office holders, including members of school boards, are sworn to abide by provisions of law. Similarly, all members of a school district's leadership team should be committed to a similar set of standards.

Although these concerns and expectations may not find their way into statutory law, identical or similar provisions can be written into school district personnel policies by official action of the board.

AASA and NSBA share the view that if the principles described in this publication are observed by board members, superintendents, and members of the administrative team, the result will be an aura of mutual respect and professional responsibility essential to ensuring effective public schools.

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